

Message Text

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44

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AF-10 OMB-01 CIAE-00 PM-07 INR-10 L-03

NEA-10 NSAE-00 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 USIA-15

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8493

SECDEF

INFO COMUSFORAZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 3452

E.O. 11652: DGS

TAGS: MARR, PO

SUBJECT: ANNOUNCEMENT OF NAVY TAKEOVER AT LAJES

1. AS WORD OF CHANGE OF HOST SERVICE FROM USAF TO USN HAS ALREADY APPEARED IN PRESS IN AZORES AND MOZAMBIQUE, NEWSWORTHINESS OF EVENT HAS BEEN LARGELY DISSIPATED. STILL, WE BELIEVE IT IS IN OUR INTEREST TO RELEASE OFFICIAL STATEMENT BY EMBASSY (USIS) LISBON TO UNDERSCORE FACT THAT CHANGE HAS RESULTED FROM NEW ROLE OF LAJES AS ANTISUBMARINE BASE. FRANK STATEMENT OF THIS SUBJECT NOW WOULD SERVE TO DRAW ATTENTION TO NATO ROLE OF LAJES.

2. TO AVOID APPEARING TO PRE-JUDGE OUTCOME OF NEGOTIATIONS, WE PROPOSE TO BLURR DATE OF USN TAKEOVER. THIS IS GIVEN PLAUSIBILITY AS PREPARATIONS FOR TAKEOVER WILL BE ACTIVELY GOING ON OVER NEXT NINE MONTHS. IN ADDITION, WE BELIEVE REFERENCE TO STUDY OF BASE REQUIREMENTS AND TO RESOLUTION OF "OTHER QUESTIONS CONCERNING CONTINUED U.S. MILITARY TENURE" WILL LEAVE USEFUL ELEMENT OF DOUBT IN PORTUGUESE MINDS.

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3. WE PROPOSE FOLLOWING TEXT: QUOTE IT WAS

ANNOUNCED RECENTLY THAT THE US DEFENSE DEPARTMENT WOULD BE CONDUCTING A SURVEY OF ITS BASES WORLD-WIDE IN LIGHT OF ITS PRESENT DEFENSE REQUIREMENTS. A JOINT AIR FORCE/NAVY TEAM HAS RECENTLY BEEN CONDUCTING A SURVEY OF LAJES FIELD IN THE AZORES. SINCE WORLD WAR II, OPERATION OF THE US FACILITIES AT LAJES FIELD HAS BEEN THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE US AIR FORCE, THE INITIAL MAJOR ROLE OF THE BASE HAVING BEEN RESUPPLY OF AIRCRAFT TRANSITING THE ATLANTIC. OVER THE YEARS THE ROLE HAS CHANGED. THE PRINCIPAL MISSION OF THE US FORCES AT LAJES IS NOW TO SUPPORT US NAVY AIRCRAFT MONITORING SUBMARINE MOVEMENTS IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC FOR THE MUTUAL BENEFIT OF MEMBERS OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION. IF OTHER QUESTIONS CONCERNING CONTINUED US MILITARY TENURE AT LAJES FIELD ARE RESOLVED, IT HAS THEREFORE BEEN DECIDED THAT RESPONSIBILITY FOR OPERATION OF THE US FACILITY AT LAJES SHOULD LOGICALLY BE TRANSFERRED FROM THE US AIR FORCE TO THE US NAVY. UNQUOTE

4. REQUEST CLEARANCE OR COMMENT SOONEST.
PORT

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NNN

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